

Chapter 23.16. EXISTING CONDITIONS AND CONCERNS

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23.16.010. Introduction.

Before a plan can be prepared for a community, there must be an understanding of the physical structure, general attitudes and existing trends which identify that community as the unique society that it constitutes. Further, it is important that there exist some understanding of the problems and issues facing the local community. The purpose of this portion of the plan is to briefly review the status of some of the elements which make up Deschutes County in 1979 and discuss the apparent direction which the County seems to be taking into the future. More detailed information on local conditions and trends may be found in the Resource Element which is part of this plan.

(Ord. 2000-017 §1, 2000; PL-20, 1979)

23.16.020. Population.

The population of the County has increased significantly since the adoption of the comprehensive plan in 1979.

Population Growth in Deschutes County: 1980 to 2000			
Sources	1980	1990	2000
Population Research Center - July 1 estimates	62,500	75,600	116,600
Census Bureau - April 1 census counts	62,142	74,958	115,367

ORS 195.025(1) requires the counties to coordinate local plans and population forecasts. In 1996, Bend, Redmond, Sisters and the County reviewed the most recent population forecasts from the Portland State University Center for Population Research and Census, the Department of Transportation, Woods and Poole, the Bonneville Power Administration and the State Department of Administrative Services Office of Economic Analysis. After review of these projections, the cities and Deschutes County agreed on the coordinated population forecast adopted by the County in 1998 by Ordinance 98-084

The results of the 2000 decennial census and subsequent population estimates prepared by the Population Research Center (PRC) at Portland State University revealed the respective populations of the County and the incorporated cities were growing faster than contemplated under the 1998 coordinated forecast. The cities and the County engaged in a coordination process between 2002 and 2004 that culminated with the County adopting a revised population forecast that projected population for the cities and the County to the year 2025. The following table displays the 2004 coordinated population forecast for Deschutes County and the urban growth boundaries of the cities of Bend, Redmond, and Sisters from 2000 to 2025:

2000-2025 Coordinated Population Forecast					
Year	Bend UGB	Redmond UGB	Sisters UGB	Unincorporated County	Total County
2000	52,800	15,505	975	47,320	116,600
2005	69,004	19,249	1,768	53,032	143,053
2010	81,242	23,897	2,306	59,127	166,572
2015	91,158	29,667	2,694	65,924	189,443
2020	100,646	36,831	3,166	73,502	214,145
2025	109,389	45,724	3,747	81,951	240,811

The process through which the County and the cities coordinated to develop the 2000-2025 coordinated forecast is outlined in the report titled "*Deschutes County Coordinated Population Forecast 2000-2025: Findings in Support of Forecast*" dated July 2004. This report provides the findings in support of the adopted forecast. The Deschutes County Year 2000 Comprehensive Plan (1979) included a population forecast from 1980 to 2000 that was incorporated in several chapters. In 1998, the County adopted a coordinated population forecast under ORS 195.036. The following table displays all three forecasts for comparison:

Deschutes County Population Forecasts from 1979, 1998, and 2004			
Year	1979 forecast	1998 forecast	2004 forecast
1980	53,400	-	-
1985	66,600	-	-
1990	82,900	74,958	-
1995	103,400	94,100	-
2000	128,200	113,231	116,600
2005	-	132,239	143,053
2010	-	151,431	166,572
2015	-	167,911	189,443
2020	-	182,353	214,145
2025	-	-	240,811

The fourth city in Deschutes County is the City of La Pine. Incorporated on November 7, 2006, the City of La Pine's 2006 population estimate of 1,590 was certified by Portland State University, Population and Research Center on December 15, 2007. As of January 1, 2009, La Pine is coordinating with the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development to develop its first comprehensive plan. As a result of La Pine incorporation, Deschutes County updated its Coordinated Population Forecast with Ordinance 2009-006. The purpose of this modification was to adopt a conservative twenty-year population forecast for the City of La Pine that can be used by city officials and the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development to estimate future land need and an urban growth boundary. The following table displays the coordinated population forecast for Deschutes County, the urban growth boundaries of the cities of Bend, Redmond, and Sisters, and the city of La Pine from 2000 to 2025:

2000-2025 Coordinated Population Forecast						
Year	Bend UGB	Redmond UGB	Sisters UGB	La Pine UGB	Unincorporated County	Total County
2000	52,800	15,505	975	-	47,320	116,600
2005	69,004	19,249	1,768	-	53,032	143,053
2010	81,242	23,897	2,306	1,697	57,430	166,572
2015	91,158	29,667	2,694	1,892	64,032	189,443
2020	100,646	36,831	3,166	2,110	71,392	214,145
2025	109,389	45,724	3,747	2,352	79,599	240,811

In the fall of 1998, the Oregon Water Resources Department acknowledged that virtually all groundwater in the Deschutes River basin discharges to the rivers of the basin. The Water Resources Department may place restrictions on the consumptive use of groundwater to protect the free flowing nature of the Deschutes River, instream water rights and existing water rights. These restrictions may affect the use of groundwater resources for future development and consequently affect the future growth and allocation of population in the County and the four urban jurisdictions.

(Ord. 2009-006 §1, 2009; Ord. 2003-078 §1, 2003; Ord. 2003-001 §1, 2003; Ord. 2000-017 §1, 2000; Ord. 98-084 §1, 1998; PL-20, 1979)

23.16.030. Economy.

Equally important in understanding the local area is the economic base of the community. Presently the timber and wood products sector is the major manufacturing employer locally, with 2,720 employees as of March 1978. However, major changes may be expected during the 20-year planning period and the overall result is difficult to assess. It does appear that conversion to processing smaller trees and maintenance of the allowable cut will permit some growth in employment but overall timber and wood products will probably play a proportionally smaller role in the County's future economy. In fact, total manufacturing is presently decreasing in importance locally. How much decrease this ultimately will amount to is difficult to predict. Regionally and nationally the economy is shifting to a more service and trade-oriented status. Given the emphasis on promoting manufacturing in Redmond and to a lesser extent in La Pine and the growing local labor pool, it seems probably that some gains in industrial employment may be expected although as a proportion of the economy some small decline may occur.

One of the strongest segments of the local economy is construction which grew 187.5 per cent between 1970 and 1978. Related to construction is the growth in finance, insurance and real estate employment, up 95.8 per cent during the same period. These industries are directly related to the large in-migration of people occurring in the County.

Tourism is also a significant factor locally, as is reflected in the strong growth (up 107.3 per cent) taking place in the services sector of the economy. Some of this growth is likely to be related to population growth and a national trend to more services. Unfortunately, service jobs tend to be somewhat lower paying and more seasonal than some other types of employment. However, the City of Sisters has chosen to base its economy almost solely on tourism. And tourism locally is a less seasonable economy which seems to provide many jobs for the young and second incomes for families.

Wholesale and retail trade has also witnessed rapid growth, up 96.9 per cent, and is probably tied to a burgeoning population and a growing importance for Bend as a regional shopping center. Agriculture, once a major factor in the local economy, has continued to decline. Only livestock areas and some of the better cropland areas, which have remained largely undivided, have continued to produce significant amounts of agricultural products. Many small farms exist in the County, but their agricultural production is largely subsidized by off-farm employment. The definition of marginal farmland and how much is marginal is a major issue in this area.

It appears Deschutes County is shifting from a rural economy to one more characteristic of a growing urban area. Growth in trade and services seems likely to continue with a growing interest in manufacturing employment, presently not evident, probable once an adequate pool of labor exists.

Unemployment has consistently been higher in Deschutes County for many years. To some extent, this situation is related to the seasonable fluctuations of such industries as tourism, logging and agriculture. Most recently, the major reason is probably the rapid influx of new residents. Many of these people are young skilled individuals who have moved here for the higher quality of life available locally and are willing to accept jobs for which they are over-qualified or to create their own employment. Given the rapid influx of people, which likely hides a large out-migration of people unable to find adequate employment (in-migration is still faster than the out-migration so the population increases), it is perhaps surprising the economy has accommodated so many.

(Ord. 2000-017 §1, 2000; PL-20, 1979)

23.16.040. Housing.

Nineteen seventy-seven housing data indicate Deschutes County residents build more single family units (62.5 per cent of all new dwelling unit permits versus a State average of 55.32 per cent), buy more mobile homes (20.4 per cent versus 15.92 per cent), and construct fewer multiple family units (17.1 per cent versus 28.75 per cent) than is characteristic Statewide. These findings appear to be consistent with the earlier population information. The low vacancy rates found locally, for single-family dwellings and multiple family units, are indicative of the rapid growth locally. One aspect of the local housing situation that is difficult to determine is the effect of seasonable housing on local housing demand. Surveys indicate about 10 per cent of the local housing stock is used as seasonal housing and is, therefore, generally unavailable to meet the need of local residents. This is a factor which must be remembered when assessing how much land needs to be set aside for housing construction.

(Ord. 2000-017 §1, 2000; PL-20, 1979)

23.16.050. Land Use.

One of the most obvious results of growing County population has been the sprawling residential development that has spread rapidly over much of western Deschutes County. This has caused the loss of valuable agricultural and forestland and accentuated the need for expensive public services. Recreational and rural tract lots in the County in 1979 accounted for 58 percent of the total lots. Interestingly, of these lots, 17,377 were found to be undeveloped.

It appears the County presently has enough available empty lots to more than serve the needs of the anticipated new rural residents.

In the La Pine area, recreational subdivisions once seen as a boon to the County taxpayer have slowly been changing to more permanent occupancies that demand schools, buses, sheriff and fire patrol, as well as a variety of other expensive services that must be delivered over a large area.

Historic structures and sites, so important to the preservation of the County's history and the education of the community, have been lost to the dictates of unregulated change.

Strip commercial development has continued to stretch out from the urban areas along the highways, often obliterating scenic views and natural lands while promoting inefficient energy consumption and traffic patterns.

Rural Service Centers have not been used as originally intended. Often the land uses constructed have little or nothing to do with the servicing of the rural population, but instead are just further examples of the spread of commercial uses along the highways or the use of loopholes to avoid planned development (i.e., Deschutes Junction).

(Ord. 2000-017 §1, 2000; PL-20, 1979)

23.16.060. Public Facilities.

As has been mentioned previously, the sprawling pattern of development which has been characteristic locally has resulted in extensions of increasingly expensive public services. Further, growth has been so rapid that even in urban areas services have lagged behind the population growth, although not so seriously as in La Pine. Occasionally, the lack of services has even created the potential for serious problems, such as the lack of sheriff's protection in La Pine and the use of irrigation water for drinking in the Bend-Tumalo areas.

Many people have expressed concern over rising tax rates and the possibility that they are subsidizing those areas of the County they would like to see left open and unchanged.

(Ord. 2000-017 §1, 2000; PL-20, 1979)

23.16.070. Transportation.

In Deschutes County, as is typical of rural areas, the primary mode of transportation is the private automobile. In fact, this area's love of outdoor activities and sprawled development seems to have resulted

in a higher rate of vehicular ownership than is characteristic Statewide. Certainly these attitudes and conditions are much of the reason mass transit has been so unsuccessful locally.
(Ord. 2000-017 §1, 2000; PL-20, 1979)

23.16.080. Other.

Concern has been expressed over the loss of wildlife habitat, such as the subdivision of deer winter ranges and the blockage of deer migration corridors in the La Pine area. The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Department has been outspoken in its concern and has, upon occasion, sued to protect the dwindling habitat.

Problems with water quality have been found to exist in La Pine and septic tanks have failed in Terrebonne. Increasingly the major environmental damage has been the loss of scenic vistas and sensitive environment areas along highways, rivers and other areas where development has occurred. Often the resources lost have been irreplaceable locally.

Fortunately, Deschutes County still has many scenic and natural resources available. Public ownership constitutes over 78 per cent of the land in the County. Proper management of both public and private lands can assure the area's primary resource--its natural beauty and diversity--is maintained for future residents.

Energy usage has been growing dramatically in Deschutes County, not only because of the population growth but also due to the low-density sprawled-out pattern, construction of energy consumptive commercial uses and a general unconcern about energy by many citizens. Interestingly, the heavy use of wood heat locally does seem to have saved a significant amount of electrical energy. Problems with coordinating activities and regulations between the various Federal, State and local agencies have often created unnecessary delays and expenses. Often this has been expressed in comments about comments about lax enforcement of local ordinances are being received. While improvement has been noted, much more will be necessary for the coordinated and productive management of public resources and services locally, particularly if growth and change continue to occur at a pace as rapid as it is now.

This brief summary of conditions, trends and local issues is not meant to be all-encompassing, but it does include the major characteristics and trends of concern in the preparation of this plan. Deschutes County has available tremendous environmental and human resources but it also suffers from many of the problems common to areas with rapid rates of growth. The scenic and environmental qualities that first attracted people will be needed in the future as well.

However, not all of the results of growth are bad. Increasing population has brought new businesses and services to the area. Educational and cultural opportunities have improved significantly. Employment alternatives have increased, as have wages. And, a lot of new people have been able to improve their quality of life. Growth and change is a mixed blessing. The purpose of this plan is to address the issues and provide the best available development alternative for this County's people. Given the complexity of local issues and the importance of the task, it is not surprising that the preparation of this plan has been a controversial and lengthy process.

(Ord. 2000-017 §1, 2000; PL-20, 1979)